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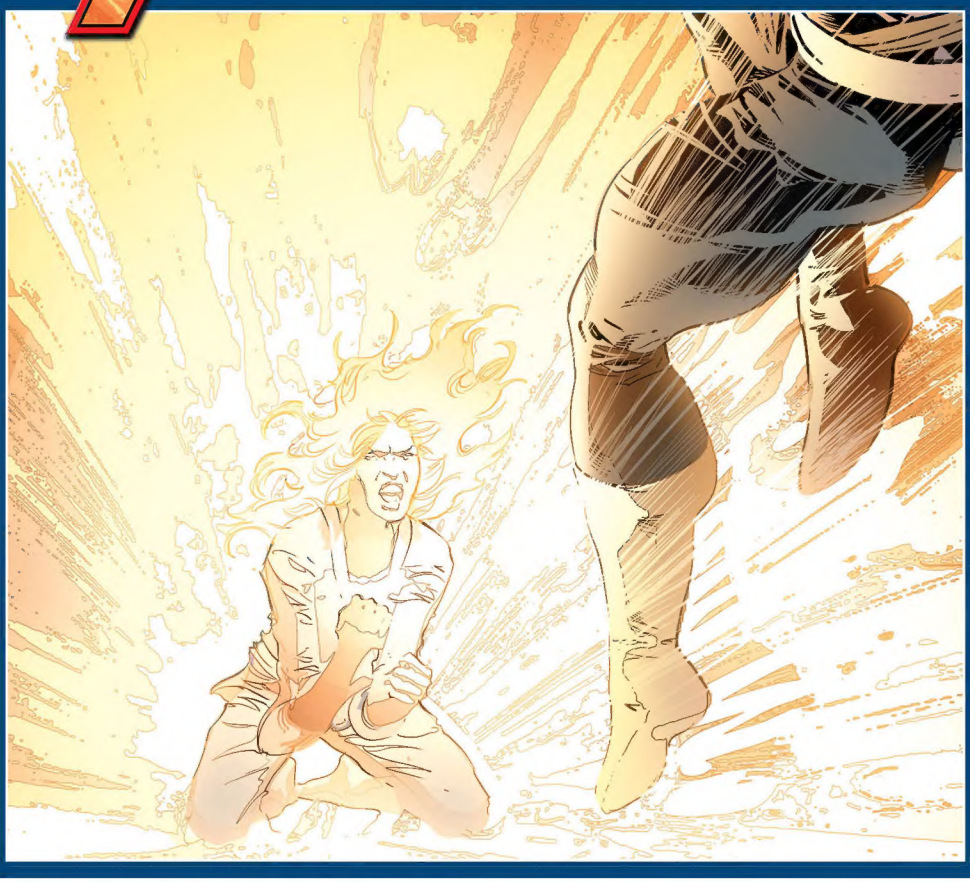
EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES, UNITED AGAINST A COMMON THREAT! ON THAT DAY THE AVENGERS WERE BORN, TO FIGHT FOES THAT NO SINGLE HERO COULD WITHSTAND!

NEW AVENGERS

IRON FIST

SPIDER-MAN



THE PHOENIX FORCE IS HEADED TOWARDS EARTH. THE AVENGERS BELIEVE THAT IT IS A DESTRUCTIVE FORCE THAT WILL LAY WASTE TO THE EARTH WHILE THE X-MEN BELIEVE IT IS A FORCE OF REBIRTH THAT COULD REIGNITE THE MUTANT RACE. BOTH BELIEVE IT WILL USE YOUNG MUTANT HOPE SUMMERS AS ITS AVATAR.

AS EARTH'S HEROES LOOK UNCERTAINLY TOWARDS THE FUTURE, THE ANSWERS TO THE FATE OF HOPE AND THE PHOENIX MAY LIE CENTURIES IN THE PAST, WHEN THE COSMIC FORCE CAME FOR A YOUNG, RED-HEADED GIRL UNDER THE TUTELAGE OF MASTER YU TI AND LEONARDO DA VINCI IN THE MYSTICAL CITY OF K'UN LUN.

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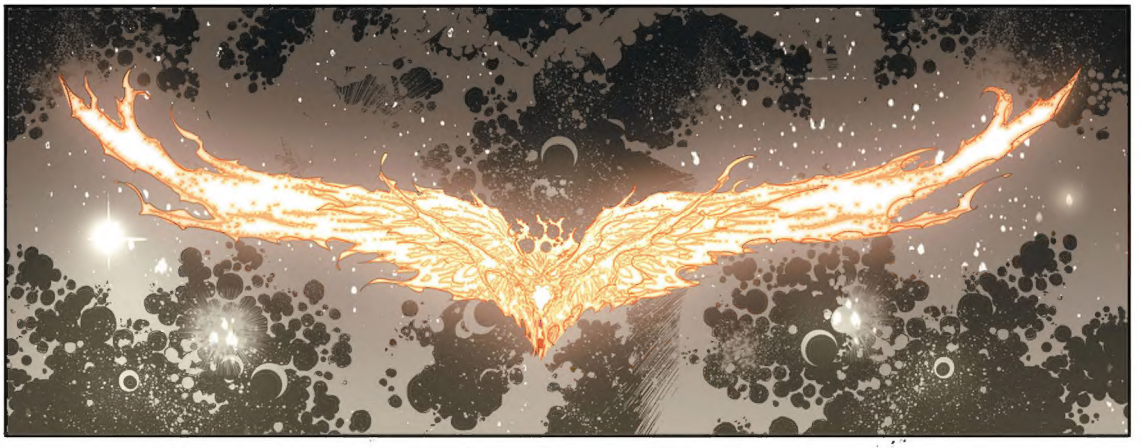
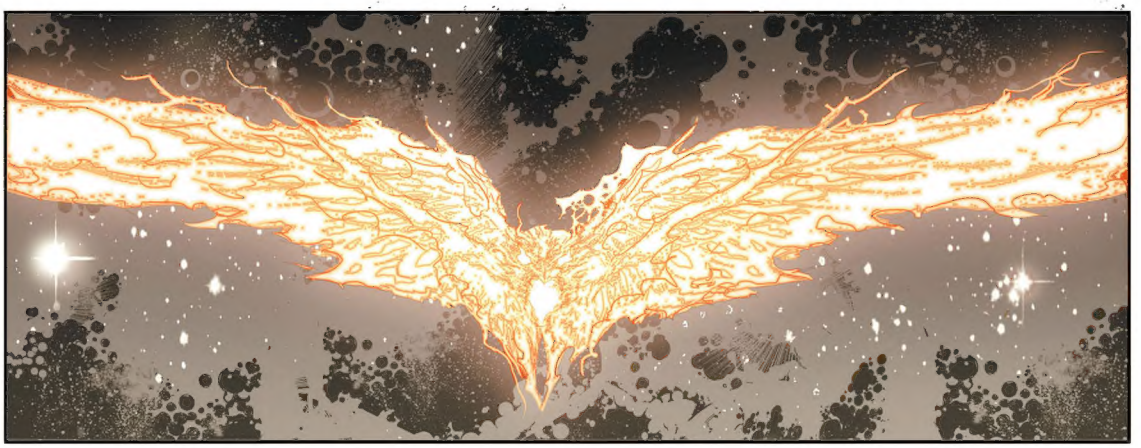
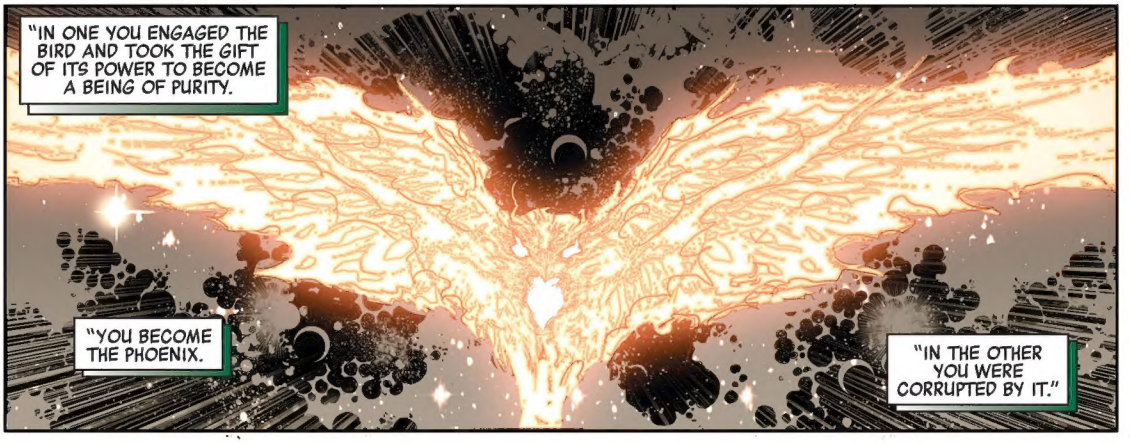
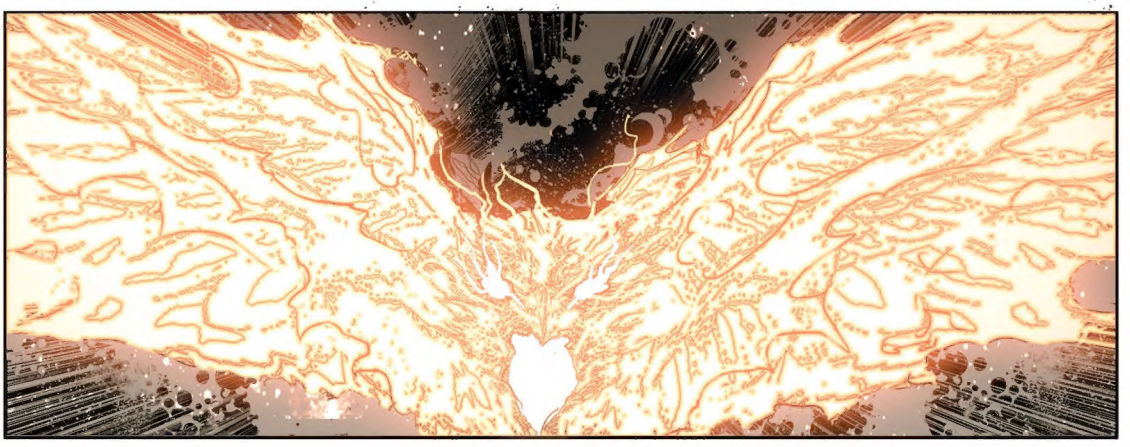


K'un Lun.
Years and years ago.



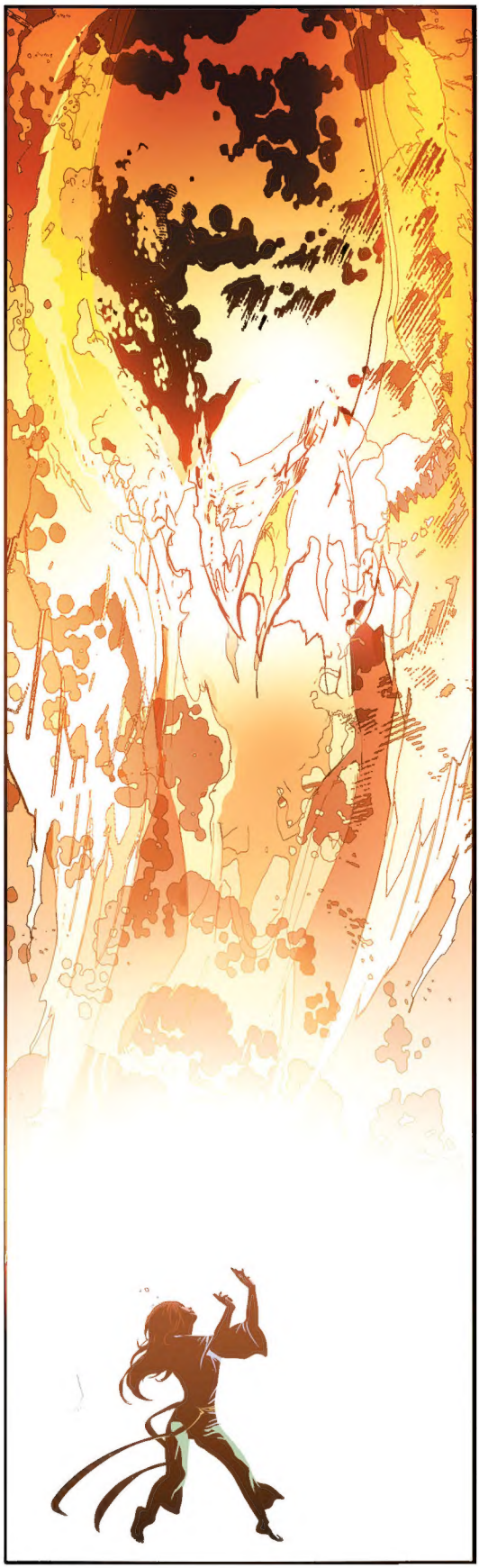

"IN ONE YOU ENGAGED THE BIRD AND TOOK THE GIFT OF ITS POWER TO BECOME A BEING OF PURITY.
"YOU BECOME THE PHOENIX.
"IN THE OTHER YOU WERE CORRUPTED BY IT."

YOU USED ITS POWER TO DESTROY ME, THE THUNDERER AND THE ENTIRE CITY OF K'UN LUN.
YOU NEVER TOLD ME THERE WERE *TWO* PATHS.
THERE ARE *ALWAYS* TWO PATHS.



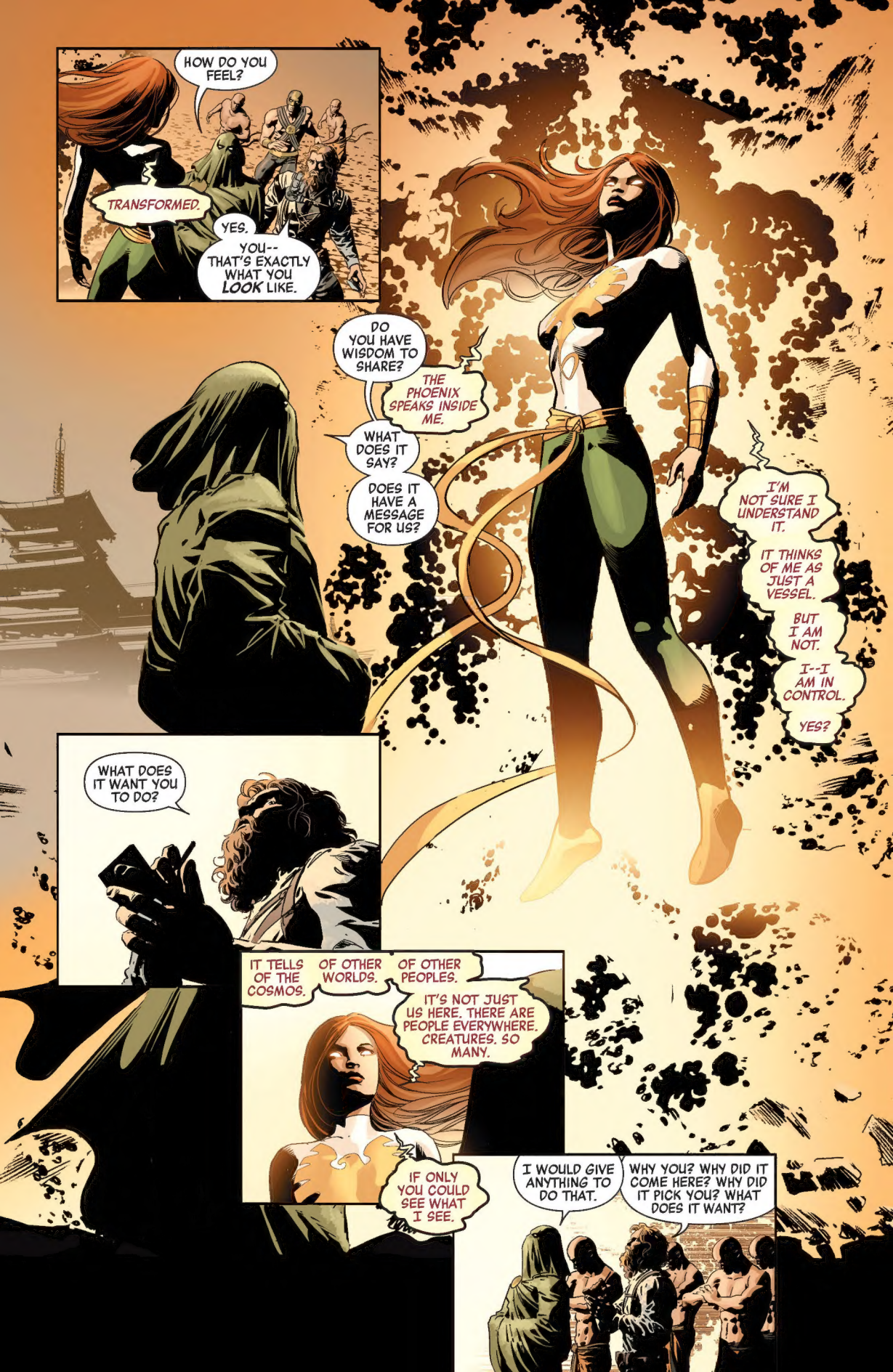
I'M SCARED, MASTER.
AS AM I.
WHAT DO I DO?
FOCUS.

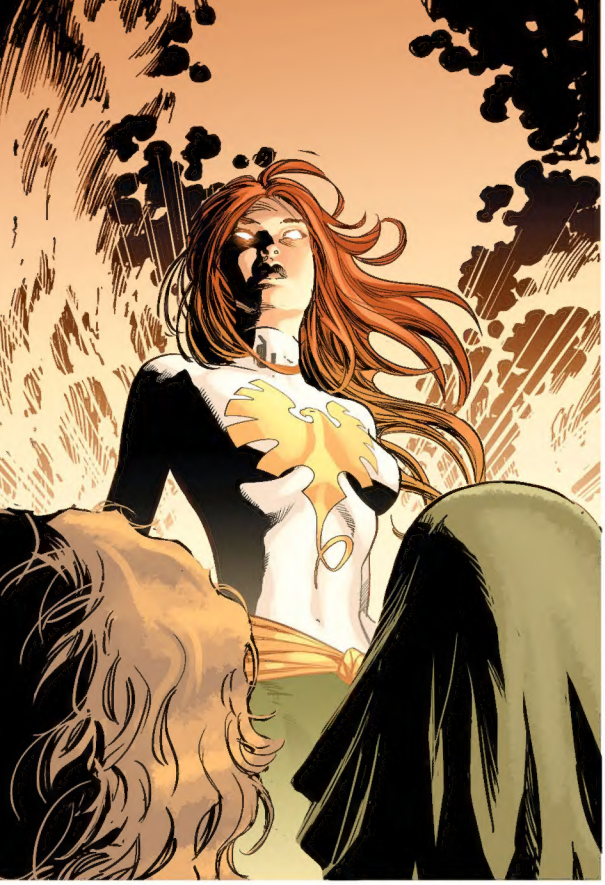
SIGNOR DA VINCI?
I'D... LISTEN TO HIM.



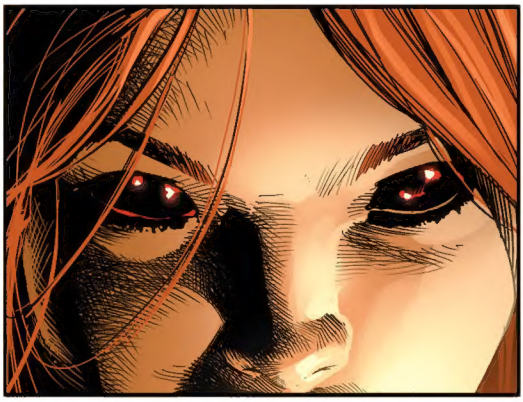
WHAT-- WHAT HAPPENED?

I BELIEVE IT IS DONE.


HOW DO YOU FEEL?
TRANSFORMED.
YES.
YOU-- THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE.
DO YOU HAVE WISDOM TO SHARE?
THE PHOENIX SPEAKS INSIDE ME.
WHAT DOES IT SAY?
DOES IT HAVE A MESSAGE FOR US?
I'M NOT SURE I UNDERSTAND IT.
IT THINKS OF ME AS JUST A VESSEL.
BUT I AM NOT.
I--I AM IN CONTROL.
YES?
WHAT DOES IT WANT YOU TO DO?
IT TELLS OF THE COSMOS.
OF OTHER WORLDS.
OF OTHER PEOPLES.
IT'S NOT JUST US HERE. THERE ARE PEOPLE EVERYWHERE. CREATURES. SO MANY.
IF ONLY YOU COULD SEE WHAT I SEE.
I WOULD GIVE ANYTHING TO DO THAT.
WHY YOU? WHY DID IT COME HERE? WHY DID IT PICK YOU? WHAT DOES IT WANT?

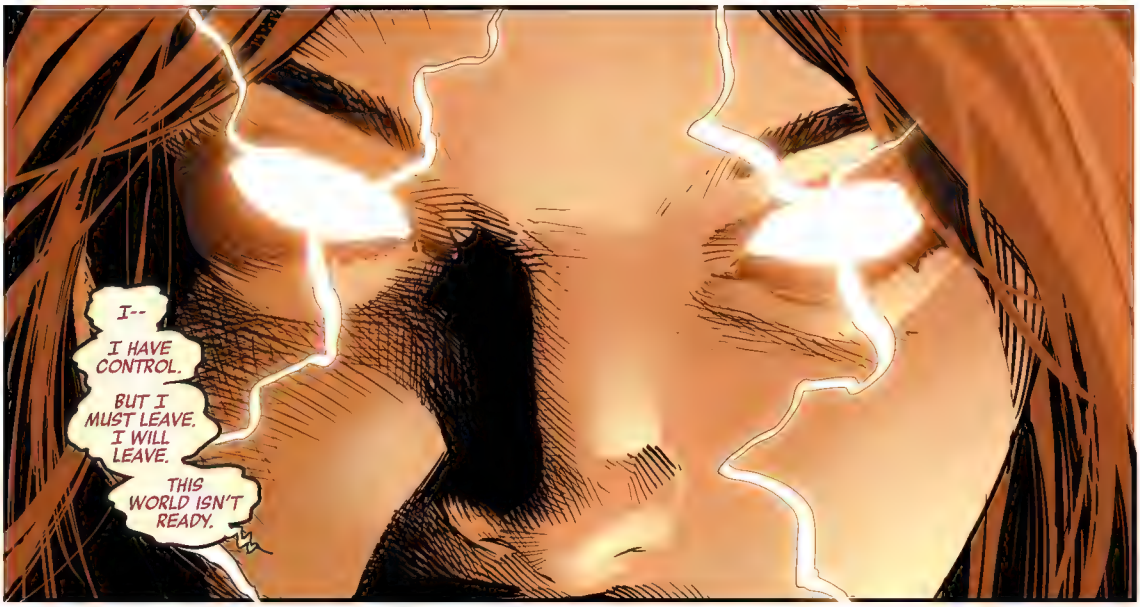


WHAT'S HAPPENING? WHAT HAPPENS NOW?
ARE YOU TO STAY OR TO LEAVE?

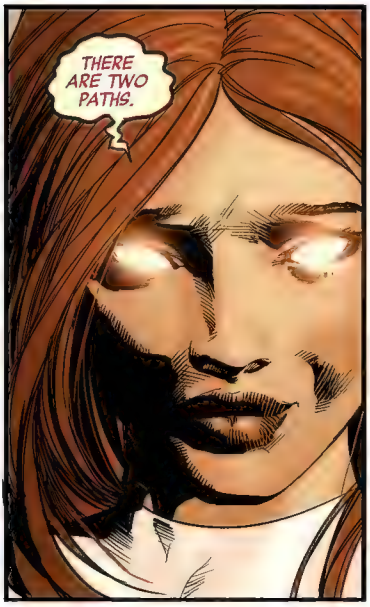


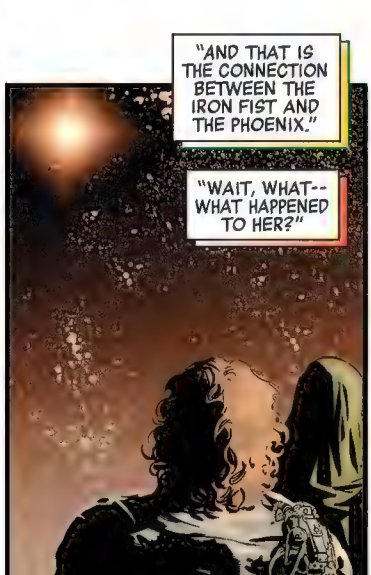
FONGJI?

Nn...
FONGJI?
WHAT ARE YOU FEELING?


I--
I HAVE CONTROL.
BUT I MUST LEAVE. I WILL LEAVE.
THIS WORLD ISN'T READY.

RE--READY FOR WHAT?
THANK YOU, MASTER. THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING.
I WISH YOU'D STAY. THERE IS MUCH TO STUDY HERE.
WILL YOU COME BACK?


THERE ARE TWO PATHS.


"AND THAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE IRON FIST AND THE PHOENIX."
"WAIT, WHAT-- WHAT HAPPENED TO HER?"

HOPE...WHAT I AM TELLING YOU IS LITERALLY EVERYTHING I KNOW.
EVERYTHING.
DID-- DID SHE DIE?
K'un Lun. Right Now.
I'M ASSUMING EVENTUALLY.
WHAT I AM TELLING YOU HAPPENED HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO.
OKAY, JUST--JUST TELL ME--WHY AM I HERE, MISTER RAND?
DANNY.
BECAUSE YOU'RE SAFE HERE, FOR THE MOMENT. AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY YOU CAN TRAIN HERE.
TRAIN TO BECOME THE PHOENIX?! THAT'S ALL I HAVE DONE APPARENTLY.
MY ENTIRE LIFE.
I TRAIN AND I TRAIN AND NOW IT'S HERE.
AND NOW THE PHOENIX IS ON EARTH AND I'M HERE INSTEAD OF THERE AND I'M NOT EVEN SURE WHAT I'M SUPPOSED TO DO WHEN I GET THERE.
EVERYONE ELSE ON THE PLANET IS FIGHTING MY FIGHT FOR ME.
IT'S NOT YOUR FIGHT.
THEN WHOSE FIGHT IS IT?
IF YOU KNEW THAT YOU'D BE READY.

THE PHOENIX IS ON EARTH.
AND YOU ARE HERE.
THE QUESTION IS NOT WHOSE FIGHT IT IS, THE QUESTION IS... WHY?
HOPE SUMMERS, THIS IS THE MASTER YU TI.
THE ONE-- THE GUY FROM THE STORY THAT TOOK PLACE HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO?
IT IS A CEREMONIAL TITLE.
WELL WHOOPEE FOR YOU! OKAY, GREAT, SO TELL ME: WHY AM I HERE?
THE PHOENIX IS ON EARTH! WHY AM I HERE?!
THE BOOK OF THE IRON FIST SAID THE GIRL WHO BECAME THE IRON FIST THAT MERGED WITH THE PHOENIX WAS MUTE.
HOW I ENVY THE MASTER YU TI WHO HAD HER INSTEAD OF YOU.
WAIT, SO, UH, I'M SUPPOSED TO BE IRON FIST NOW?
NO, YOU SEE, I AM AND THERE CAN ONLY BE ONE--
MAYBE.
MAYBE?
LET'S FIND OUT, SHALL WE?
FOLLOW ME, YOUNG ONE, AND TRY NOT TO TALK...AT ALL.

THIS IS THE SCRYING VESSEL OF BO-LING.

ALL THAT IS REQUIRED IS THAT YOU SIT.

EMPTY YOUR MIND.

THE WATER WILL TELL US MUCH.

HOW EXACTLY?

SIT. BE STILL.

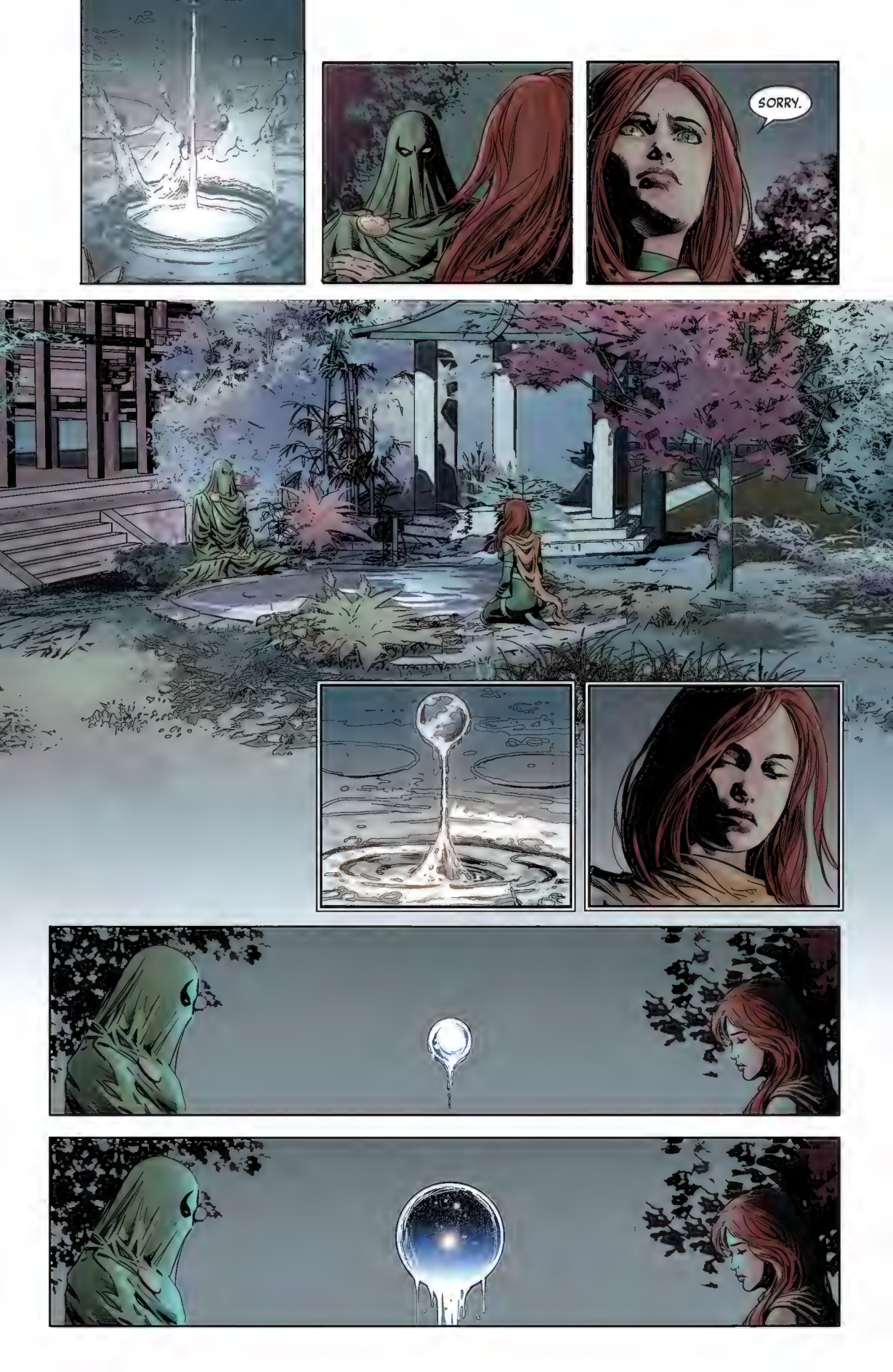
ALL WILL BE REVEALED.

EMPTY YOUR MIND.

WAIT...IS THIS GOING TO TELL ME MY FUTURE?

JUST SETTLE YOURSELF, YOUNG ONE.

DOES THIS TELL HOW THIS ENDS? DO I BECOME THE PHOENIX? CAN I STOP ALL THIS CRAZY? AM I AN IRON FIST? CAN YOU MAKE ME ONE?

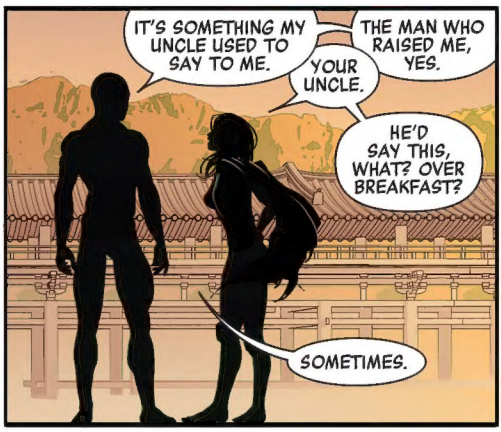

SORRY.

NO.
STOP IT.
THE SPIDER.
OH MY GOD.
WELL, THAT WAS INTERESTING.
IT--IT'S TRUE.
I AM THE PHOENIX.
IS THAT WHAT YOU TOOK AWAY FROM THAT?
WH-WHAT DID YOU TAKE AWAY?
YOU DO NEED TO BE TRAINED.
BY THE SPIDER.
SAY WHAT NOW?

SAY WHAT NOW?
TRAIN HER.
TEACH HER EVERYTHING YOU KNOW.
BUT--BUT AREN'T YOU THE KUNG FU MASTER OF ALL KUNG FU MASTERS?
QUITE.
SO SHOULDN'T YOU DO THE--?
NOW IT IS YOUR TURN.
HASN'T SHE ALREADY BEEN TRAINED BY CYCLOPS AND WOLVERINE AND--AND--AND--?
CABLE.
CABLE.
YES.
NOW... IT IS YOUR TURN.
BUT--BUT WE COULD HAVE DONE THAT BACK IN NEW YORK.
BUT YOU WOULDN'T HAVE KNOWN TO DO IT.
YES, BUT, SEE, WOLVERINE ACTUALLY IS A TEACHER--TO THE SHOCK OF ALL MANKIND--AND DANNY HERE, DANNY KNOWS ALL THE--
I WONDER IF YOU ARE TO TEACH HER SELF-LOATHING.

WELL, IT IS WHAT I HAVE MY DOCTORATE IN.
SO I GUESS YOU TWO SHOULD, UH, GET TO IT.
WHAT ARE YOU PEOPLE ON?!
WE'LL BE AT THE PORTAL.
UH, SO...
I'M NOT DRESSING LIKE YOU. I CAN TELL YOU THAT!
GOOD.
THERE'S ALREADY LIKE 8 SPIDER-LADIES.
OKAY, SO...
SO, UH, WHAT'S MAGNETO LIKE?
SO YOU'VE GOT NOTHING.
GIVE ME A BREAK. I JUST GOT THE GIG.
OKAY, WELL, YOU GO FIGURE THE "GIG" OUT AND I'LL BE OVER HERE FIGURING OUT WHAT EXACTLY I'VE BEEN PUT ON THIS EARTH TO DO, HOW I ENDED UP IN A MAGICAL KUNG FU CITY WHERE NO ONE TEACHES ANYONE KUNG FU, AND WHAT I'M SUPPOSED TO DO WHEN THE COSMIC POWERS OF A BIG FIREBIRD DUMP THEMSELVES RIGHT ON MY HEAD...
BECAUSE, RIGHT NOW, I'M PRETTY SURE THE WORLD'S GOING TO EXPLODE AND EVERYONE'S GOING TO BLAME ME AND I DIDN'T ASK FOR ANY OF THIS. NOT ONE DAMN BIT OF IT.
YEAH, WELL...

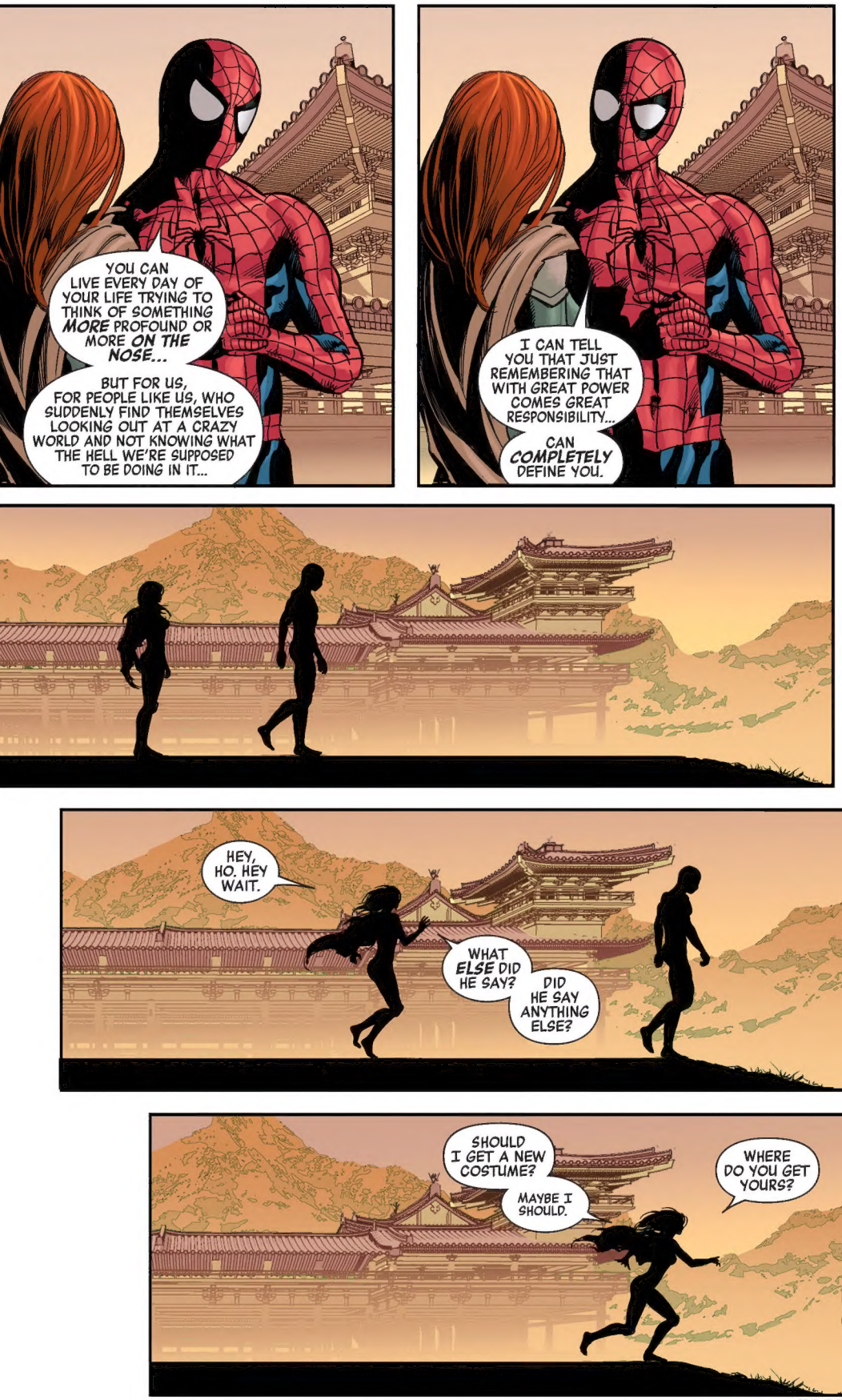
WITH GREAT POWER COMES GREAT RESPONSIBILITY.
WHAT?!
WITH GREAT *POWER* COMES GREAT *RESPONSIBILITY.*
WHAT THE HELL AM I SUPPOSED TO DO WITH *THAT?*


IT'S SOMETHING MY UNCLE USED TO SAY TO ME.
THE MAN WHO RAISED ME, YES.
YOUR UNCLE.
HE'D SAY THIS, WHAT? OVER BREAKFAST?
SOMETIMES.

AND THIS WAS BEFORE I GOT BIT BY THE SPIDER THAT DUMPED *ITS* SPIDER-POWERS ALL OVER *MY* HEAD AND EVERYONE STARTED BLAMING *ME* FOR EVERY BAD THING THAT EVER HAPPENED TO NEW YORK CITY.
SO *YEAH...*

THE THING IS, WHEN HE SAID IT, I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THE HELL HE WAS *TALKING* ABOUT AND I DIDN'T *FIGURE OUT* WHAT HE WAS TALKING ABOUT UNTIL IT WAS TOO LATE.
UNTIL SOME IDIOT WITH A GUN SHOT AND KILLED HIM.
AN IDIOT WHO I COULD HAVE, MAYBE, DEFINITELY, STOPPED IF I WASN'T SO BUSY WORRYING ABOUT MYSELF AND, INSTEAD, REALLY LISTENING TO THE WORDS HE WAS SAYING.

WITH GREAT POWER THERE MUST COME GREAT RESPONSIBILITY.
AND EVER SINCE THAT DAY... I'VE BEEN TRYING TO LIVE A LIFE THAT RESEMBLES WHAT THOSE WORDS MEAN.
AND I CAN TELL YOU THEY MEAN *EVERYTHING.*
I CAN ALSO TELL YOU *THIS...*



TO BE CONTINUED...

NEXT: BREAKOUT FROM THE X-BRIG

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MARVEL

Save the Date

Astonishing X-Men #51
June 20th, 2012

Megan